

(a) whether the agriculture experts have asked the Government to enhance the investments in infrastructure for the agriculture sector;

(b) if so, the total investments in infrastructure for agricultural sector made by the Government during the last three years and the result achieved thereby; and

(c) the time by which the investment in infrastructure is likely to be enhanced ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) No, Sir. However, the Government assigns a very high priority to investment in the development of infrastructure in the agriculture sector.

(b) As per the estimates made by the Central Statistical Organisation, the figures of gross capital formation (which includes fixed assets such as irrigation, buildings, roads, bridges and other construction works, machinery and equipments) in the Public Sector as also the total during the last three years i.e. from 1993-94 to 1995-96 at current and at 1980-81 prices are given below:

(Rs. in crores)

Year	Total		Public Sector	
	At current prices	At 1980-81 prices	At current prices	At 1980-81 prices
1993-94	17009	5038	4467	1153
1994-95	20737	5678	5620	1329
1995-96*	24937	6301	6274	1310

*Quick estimates

Source : C.S.O.

(c) The thrust of the Public Sector Investment is on optimising investment already made. The strategy to increase capital formation in agriculture includes increase plan outlay and increasing the proportion for development of infrastructure, more efficient use of resources to rise productivity and ensuring remunerative prices to farmers to enable them to use savings for higher investment. A new Rural Infrastructure Development Fund within NABARD has been established to provide credit for medium and minor irrigation and soil conservation projects. A Scheme of Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) is also initiated for providing assistance to States by way of loans for timely completion of selected large and multi purpose irrigation projects.

Support Prices of Pepper, Cashewnut, etc.

1667. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are considering to bring some other commodities like pepper, cashewnut, rubber, cardamom, etc. under the support price programme;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government also propose to bring the said commodities under the purview of Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices; and

(e) the preventive measures proposed to be taken by the Government to check the fluctuation of the prices of the said commodities ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) to (c) The Government is fixing the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of all major agricultural commodities. The other commodities, mainly horticultural and spices crops, including pepper, cashew and cardamom, are covered under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) to protect the interest of farmers from making distress sale of their produce. The MIS is undertaken on year to year basis at the specific request of a particular State Government as and when it is apprehended that price of a commodity may fall to uneconomic levels for the farmers during peak arrival period. A pre-determined quantity at a price fixed by the Central Government, in consultation with the concerned State Government, are procured by NAFED as central nodal agency and the agencies nominated by State Government on equal basis. The losses, if any, under the scheme are shared by the Central and State Government on 50:50 basis. As no proposal has been received from any State Government in this regard, no MIS is being implemented in above mentioned crops at present.

(d) At present, there is no proposal to bring the said commodities under the purview of MSP recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.

(e) Any undue fall in the prices of various fruits, vegetables and spices is sought to be prevented through judicious implementation of MIS in appropriate cases. Prices of these commodities are also sought to be regulated through appropriate trade policies as also through various developmental measures for increasing their domestic production.

National Dairy Development Board

1668. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Dairy Development Board has been receiving grants in the form of milk products from the European Community Countries and other developed countries for the past several years;

(b) if so, the date on which this scheme was introduced and the assistance received till date, year-wise;

(c) whether this assistance was to be withdrawn in the last year but has been extended further on the request of NDDB; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and the period for which this assistance will continue as per the latest arrangement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) and (b) The National Dairy Development Board has been receiving commodity assistance from the European Economic Community (EEC) by way of funding Operation Flood Phase II and III. Yearwise quantities of skimmed milk powder (SMP) and butter fat received are as follows :

Period	Quantity (MT)		
	SMP	Butter Oil	Butter
1978-79	6956	3451	NIL
1979-80	28216	9713	1282
1980-81	13531	9373	850
1981-82	73644	14035	3967
1982-83	37573	9331	3457
1983-84	7695	599	600
1984-85	48969	15859	6421
1985-86	9516	2813	3492
1986-87	5859	344	800
1987-88	22000	3032	6059
1988-89	17990	NIL	7314
1989-90	14991	NIL	NIL
1990-91	NIL	NIL	NIL
1991-92	NIL	NIL	NIL
1992-93	11994	NIL	NIL
1993-94	3000	NIL	NIL

No commodity assistance has been received after 1993-94.

(c) and (d) No Sir. Not only was the commodity assistance not extended but was prematurely terminated after 1993-94 as the EEC felt that India was no longer entitled for commodity assistance.

[Translation]

Increase in Sugar Price

1669. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
SHRI NITISH KUMAR :

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government had already taken a decision to increase the prices of sugar but its public announcement was made on February 10, 1997;

(b) if so, the date on which this decision was taken and the reasons for the delay in the announcement made in this regard;

(c) whether the Government have estimated the loss incurred due to delay in announcement even after taking the decision; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) and (b) In consultation with the Ministry of Finance, a decision was taken on 7.2.1997 to notify on 8.2.1997 the increase in issue price of levy sugar to Rs. 10.50 per kg, so as to be effective from 10.2.1997. The time between the notification and effective date was given to enable the states to do the physical verification of stocks. The notification itself was issued on 8.2.1997, as decided.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

[English]

Smuggling of Herbs

1670. SHRI RAJKESHAR SINGH :
PROF. OM PAL SINGH 'NIDAR' :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether cases of large scale smuggling and unscientific exploitation of the herbs possessing important medicinal values, once found in abundance in the hilly regions in the country, have come to the notice of the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the remedial steps taken by the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN